








STRESS BUSTERS

15 TIPS TO A BETTER HOLIDAY SEASON

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- 1. Gain a feeling of control.** "The should, the ought to, the must, and the have to are the burdens of the holiday time," said Nathan, a professor of family practice and psychiatry at Albany (N.Y.) Medical College. "If we look at what's meaningful to us and those we care about, we can simplify and avoid a lot of stress."
 - 2. Set priorities.** What is it you really want to accomplish? Make a list of the most important things and schedule time for them. That way they won't get lost in the shuffle. Postpone activities that can wait until after the holidays, when you will have more time.
 - 3. Be realistic.** "The holidays are supposed to be the time when extended families get together and everyone enjoys each other's company," said Rehm a professor of psychology at the University of Houston. "But a lot of families are not like that, so be realistic about what to expect."
 - 4. Eat what you want (in moderation).** "The holidays are not the time of year to deny yourself," said Luke, a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association (ADA). "If you choose to eat a high-calorie goodie, eat it slowly and enjoy the taste of it in your mouth."
 - 5. Don't plan to overeat.** "People have told me they go to holiday parties in loose-fitting clothes, so they have room to expand," said Thom, an ADA spokesperson. "When I go to parties, I like to wear something more form-fitting, because then I know I have less room to overeat."
 - 6. Limit or avoid alcohol.** Alcohol can numb or weaken your resolve to eat well, and one of the consequences of bad eating behavior is stress, alcohol also contains a lot of calories.
 - 7. Don't worry. Be happy.** You're not always going to be able to avoid long lines or an endless search for a parking space. When these kinds of things happen, use a quick relaxation technique like breathing deeply and enjoying a happy holiday memory.
 - 8. Help others.** People often feel good about doing things for other people and that's a good way to relieve some of the stress.
 - 9. Ask for help.** Get your kids to help you with baking, gift wrapping and shopping. Sometimes what we find to be drudgery can be a lot of fun for kids.
 - 10. Treat yourself.** If you are feeling overwhelmed, stop and do something that calms you like exercising, taking a bath or reading a book that you may have put off because of your schedule.
 - 11. Plan inexpensive activities.** Singing and reading holiday stories are examples of fun family activities that can get you into the holiday spirit with little or no cost.
 - 12. Lighten up.** Sometimes we get a little too serious about our holiday preparations, but it's often the imperfections in our holidays that are the most memorable.
 - 13. Making family decisions.** Your son may want to do one thing, your daughter another. Meet with your family to get their input on what their expectations are. This can reduce stress and make your children feel involved.
 - 14. Potluck party.** If you like hosting holiday parties but always feel overwhelmed, have your guests bring a dish. This way you still have the opportunity to enjoy the social part without having to do all the work.
 - 15. Post-holiday fun.** Plan a fun activity for the day after the holiday or in the next few weeks. This will give you something to look forward to when holiday stress hits.
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